

# Gossip About Plays, Players and Playhouses

MAHA was visited during the week by three of the most notable of American actresses, and just to show that they had no special pick between the three, Omaha people neglected all of them. One is at a loss to understand this indifference. Blanche Walsh came with what has been announced the strongest and most dramatic play she has ever acted in, a drama of genuine power, and not without some beauty, and she played it as she has never before played in Omaha. Lillian Russell came in a cute little comedy with melodramatic tinge, just the sort of thing that would be popular these times, and she, too, played well in it. And then Grace George came with a modern adaptation of a French comedy that was laid several years ago, and she played it in the same manner that delighted thousands in London and New York.

Let us speak of Blanche Walsh. This charming actress has at last found her true character, but is no longer merely assuming a character, but is really living the role she undertakes. When Miss Walsh was being swept into fame as the successor of Fanny Davenport in the *Sardou* roles, her warmest admirers detected the false note in her work. *La Tosca*, *Fedora*, *Gianna*—all were artificial. She gave them in a realistic fashion, rounding out with much attention to petty detail the various characters, but never quite fully realizing the passion she was seeking to portray. So she fell a little short of greatness. Then came a time of trying for a play, "The Hunt for Happiness" was an example of the stuff on which Miss Walsh's splendid talent was wasted. *Katasha Maslova* very nearly touched the mark, but not quite. It was a realistic character, a characterization of Tolstoy's great creation, *Maslova*, which Miss Walsh gave, in "The Resurrection," and some acclamations as having at last come to her own. But not yet. Even in the prison, where she was at her very acme of realism, in her sudden recklessness and demoralization, *Maslova* was merely an assumption. Miss Walsh understood, but did not feel the part. She fully filled the girl in her misfortunes, and she portrayed the part as she understood it, with the effect that no one who saw it will ever forget the picture. But *Maslova* was no more of a success than *La Tosca*. After *Tolstoy* came *Clyde Fitch*, and in "The Woman in the Case" and "The Straight Road" this woman of soul and strength played two years, assimilating the surface emotions of types that were portrayed by the school of acting graduates with conviction. Dramatic growth in such atmosphere is impossible, and she struggled with herself for patience to hold on until her opportunity would come. And now she has been rewarded.

In *Gordin's* heroine, which promises so little to the superficial observer, she has found a part that has called into life the genius for expression that has slumbered in her soul for all these years. Blanche Walsh is now a truly great actress. She has found a role that calls for all her strength and she gives it without reserve. The result is a revelation to those who have watched her. She no longer merely assumes the role, but from that moment she appears in the first act, until the tremendous climax in the last moment of the play, she lives the part. Her personality is sunk entirely in that of *Hattie Friedlander*, and she gives herself over to the mental torture and soul anguish of the woman who endures all to the explanation of her mistake, until, driven mad by the heartless selfishness of husband and sister, she slays her tormentors. Her temperamental qualifications are ideal for the part. Naturally reserved, she is of an ardent nature, quick and impulsive in her ways, and gracious generosity personified. No woman has ever more deeply desired to be understood than she. Her natural attributes as here manifested have been in *Gordin's* mind when he drew *Hattie*. At any rate, Miss Walsh comes to the part not only with full understanding, but with a fine predisposition to sympathize with the woman who endures all to the sake of her father, who she loves, and to those who trouble she would not think of adding her own unhappiness.

*Gordin* drew his characters boldly and fully, and then filled in the outlines with such painstaking fidelity as might be expected from the miniature painter. He slighted nothing, and, apparently, he forgot nothing, for the more one reflects on the drama, the more apparent is its completeness. Its force is direct, its logic incontestable, and its consummation is unavoidable. It is a tragedy, but a tragedy that is not a tragedy, but a comedy of life. Such humor as relieves its gloom is natural, and at no time forced and never depending on smart epigram or horse play. The people who take part in its action move naturally, and its sequentiality, and its currents all lead to the same center. It is really a marvelous study in a way, and whether it entitles *Gordin* to be called the *Yiddish Shakespeare*, or whether it doesn't, it does give him the right to assume a high place among modern dramatists. His is fortunate, and even more so qualified a woman as Blanche Walsh to introduce him to the American people. Mrs. Fiske was thought of for the part, and Madame Kalich did give one or two presentations of it in New York, but it may easily be doubted if either of these could give to the role the inspired interpretation Miss Walsh has brought to it. Mrs. Fiske finds her forte in expression by action, as in "Mary of Magdala," or "Loch Kleschna," on which her fame as a contralto actress chiefly rests, and the same is largely true of *Bertha Kalich*, although she has made something of a success in "Marta de the Lowlands," a role that calls for more of repression than any other in her range of achievements. But Blanche Walsh is repression personified. She moves through act after act, and through scene after scene, tensely vigorous, but always holding herself in check, suggesting rather than indicating the terrible strain under which she is constantly contending with her desire to cry out and end it all. It is a most remarkable performance, and seems the more so when we contrast it with the demonstrative *Florida Tesca* or the sullenly sullen *Katasha Maslova*. But it is the true woman, and it is as impressive in the last degree by the fidelity with which Miss Walsh holds to it

until the very end. At last, when nature can bear no more, when the full tide of suffering has risen, and all barriers of reserve are broken down by the indignation of the woman in revolt at the insolence of her sister who has supplanted her with her husband, she bursts forth, not in the torrent of passionate utterance one might expect, and which has been so long traditionally accepted as the correct method of expressing great emotion, but with the terse utterance of desperate determination, and the climax is attained with such effect that *Hattie* is actually applauded for murdering *Celia* and *Gregoire*. It is surely a triumph that any actress might be proud of, and it fairly makes the coming of Miss Walsh into her own as an actress of genuine ability. She has found her own soul.

In the course of a conversation while in Omaha, Miss Walsh spoke of the difficulty of finding a new play for next season. She does not need a new play. Until she has made "The Kreutzer Sonata" as familiar as she made "La Tosca," she need not look for another character. And Jacob Gordin is again congratulated that he has found a woman so well qualified by nature and experience to present his drama of life to the American public.

Miss Walsh's health is still the cause of much worry to her managers, although she is putting the best face on the matter, and is earnestly striving to go through the rest of the season. She is finishing an unusually hard tour, with an uncommon number of one-night stands and trying jumps from town to town. In the south she encountered at Shreveport a hot wave of such calorific intensity as to put her entirely out of condition to play. A few days' rest seemed to give her back enough strength to continue her tour, and she undertook the rest of her trip, which was to last until

the middle of May, and which would take her into more undiscovered regions. At Sioux City, the night after she left Omaha, she was again overcome by an attack of heart failure, and the audience was dismissed. The company went on to Mitchell, S. D., where the next performance was to be given and it was expected she would be sufficiently recovered to keep up the work. But she has disappointed her home on Long Island and purchased a place on Buzzard's Bay, near Gray Gables. There she expects to take a long rest as soon as her tour is ended, and Messrs. Wagenhall and Kemper, her managers, say she will not start till late in September or early in October for next season.

Only in a different way did Miss George's triumph differ from that of Miss Walsh. As a comedienne Miss George has had much the same experience as Miss Walsh has had in her serious work. But in the Mayo version of the old *Sardou* comedy she has come to the front in a way that must be gratifying to her and to all her admirers. These latter have multiplied most wonderfully since Miss George took up *Cyrienne*. Her talent for expression is admirably adapted to the character of the *Sardou* heroine, and in it she fairly revels. She was praised in London and, for that matter, all through England, with a unanimity never before enjoyed by an American actress, unless it was *Mary Anderson*. In all the chorus not one note of dissent was heard, and the language was quite exhausted by the critics in their efforts to describe her and express their admiration of her. It is a remarkable tribute to her splendid ability that in America her success has been quite as great as in England. It is also an answer to the oft-repeated statement that English humor and American humor differ essentially.

It is in a great hurry to get back. "I am in a great hurry to get back," she said to the writer, "for the Americans delight me, and I had a lovely time there. Of course, I never dreamed of saying some of the things the papers credited me with before I came. It was there that I was never so annoyed and treated as I was by a reporter who met me on my arrival at Liverpool. Over in America, where all are equal, the reporters have a right to be free and easy, but over here they haven't any such right."

What do you think of it? It is well for us to invest our money which we save from month to month. It is well for us to live comfortably and prepare for a rainy day, but musicians can be just as forgetful of the ideal as the coldest business man, or speculator, if they "set the habit." And then it is also a subject for a musical department, for there are many business men who have a love for music and for the arts, and still they neglect to feed that part of their nature, and it is a mistake. After all, man is made for growth, and he is given "gold nuts" to dig for golden treasures of the mind and soul, and not merely for the "dross" of ore. You remember the story of the farmer who wanted more money to buy more land to raise more corn, so that he could sell more corn, to feed more hogs, so that he could sell them to buy more land to raise more corn to feed more hogs, and so on. And what of it? One of my dearest friends said to me a while ago, "You remember that this is not an age of the ideal; nowadays we must get results." And the peculiar part seemed to be the intimation that it mattered not how the results were obtained. This remark of my friend's has come to me many times, and it has made me sad, more than once, for he is worthy of the highest things. And then I came across these words in a book by Henry Wood, which I have been reading recently, and these words are true, for they have been experienced and felt, and experience cannot lie—some say it is the only knowledge! "The ideal is the real, the truth and the reality for which man hungers and thirsts. He fails to interpret his own restlessness. He is delving among lower models, while he encloses the higher. Disappointment will continue until the loftier is sought out and awakened. Order is not found in things, but must be set up in one's own soul."

Another good thought that has been in circulation recently is brought to my mind by seeing it in Mr. Charles French's column, "Major and Minor," in the *Chicago Musical Leader* and *Concert Goer*, which he very modestly signs A. Non. This column affords me much hearty enjoyment, and it is strange that he should have quoted this particular sentence, for I had recently been much impressed by it. It is a copy of the delectable *Fra Elbertus*, free lance, the "Philistine." The thought is this: "To escape criticism do nothing, say nothing, be nothing." In other words, if you want to do something, be something, say something, you will be as sure of criticism as you are of taxes and death. Therefore, by this department, the music critic has been careful to send them over to the proper place, but he cannot always do this. All church notices of every kind are to be sent to the city editor, who will turn them over to the man in charge of the church department, sometimes known as the religious editor. All notices of this kind are published in the *Saturday Evening Bee*. The music critic of the *Bee* is engaged in church work himself and never prints his own church news in this column. The *Bee* wishes to be fair and just towards all, and therefore if the music man wants his program printed, he must do just as any other choirmaster or music director does.

On Tuesday evening, April 21, a very fine military band from Sweden will give a concert at the Auditorium. It is a "crack" military organization, under the auspices of his majesty, King Gustav V of Sweden. It is directed by Erik Hoegberg of the court orchestra and will be of interest to all music-lovers. My friend John Helgren is local manager, and he vouches for the excellence of the organization, which, to me, is a very evident guarantee of its performance and worth.

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**THE VIRGINIAN**  
 THE WONDERFUL DRAMA OF THE RANGE  
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 The Minstrel Miss.  
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 GREAT BATTLE SCENE BETWEEN REAL INDIANS AND COWBOYS.  
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 School of Acting  
 (A practical training school for dramatic and operatic stage)  
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 Students' Matinee Engagements  
**LILLIAN FITCH, Director**  
 W. J. BURGESS, Manager

matinee and night today and for the evening week. One of a number of top-line attractions to draw for first favors will be John C. Rice and Sally Cohen in the brisk farcette entitled "A Bachelor's Wife," declared to bristle with uproariously funny lines. Pauline Hall, the popular queen of comic opera, who was on the opening bill taking in their more than nine years ago and who has not appeared in Omaha since, returns with those vocal and physical charms that brought her fame as a prima donna. Nellie Florede and her "Six English Rockers," a bevy of dainty and sprightly little singing girls have an act in four scenes, each with characteristic songs and dancing in their beautiful costumes, the appropriate songs being "Fluffy Ruffles of Long Ago," "Frow, Frow," "I'm a Regular College Chap" and "The Girl in the Rocking Chair." Bertie Heron, "The Minstrel Miss," does the burnt cork gait and amuses with song, dance and story. The felicitous troupe of Italian gymnasts, five women and three men, are in the act of catching songs being "Fluffy Ruffles of Long Ago," "Frow, Frow," "I'm a Regular College Chap" and "The Girl in the Rocking Chair." Bertie Heron, "The Minstrel Miss," does the burnt cork gait and amuses with song, dance and story. The felicitous troupe of Italian gymnasts, five women and three men, are in the act of catching songs being "Fluffy Ruffles of Long Ago," "Frow, Frow," "I'm a Regular College Chap" and "The Girl in the Rocking Chair."

When "The Fadedites" come to the Orpheum next week their program will be made up of numbers proven most popular by vote. Each patron of the Orpheum is invited to send in a list of the compositions and from pieces given having the majority of admirers according to these lists the daily program of "The Fadedites" will be arranged. No limit is placed on the character of the numbers selected; they may range from rag-time to classic; but to make orchestration possible, all the compositions submitted must be recognized in the list of standard works. For the convenience of patrons a blank coupon will be printed in the programs used today and all the coming week.

General Manager Beck has now added a producing department to the organization of the Orpheum circuit and next season expects to produce some one-act musical comedies. Mr. Beck has made arrangements with Reginald De Koven for four operettas, which will be staged by the new producing department under the direction of Mr. Charles Foley. Mr. De Koven will have as a collaborator Robert B. Smith, author of "A Knight for a Day," "Patama" and other pieces.

**Stargeland Gossip.**  
 Truly Shattuck will sing "Love Me and the World Is Mine" at the Berlin winter garden in Germany.

The loss of diamonds by actresses is now being especially noted in the case of Miss Lillian Russell, who is reported to be losing a diamond necklace valued at \$1,000 the late is quite true. Miss Stahl is offering \$500 for its return.

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The trend of thought of the men who make the modern songs is aptly illustrated by the title to the songs of the "Fadedites." They are "When I Peel Like Loving," "You Can't Be a Friend to Everybody," "One Little Boy Had Musical Notes," "Nothing to Do but Do Nothing," "Honey-moon Trail," "Whose Little Girl Are You?" "The Good Wife," "The Moon and the Moon," "I'm Going to Steal the Moon" and "I Don't Want a Million Dollars."

"I don't go much on schools of acting," said David Warfield, but he said it thoughtfully, as though he had thought of a denuded dramatic school, but was still willing to give them another trial, which moderate expression of his view is characteristic. "They're good enough to get a fellow a job, maybe, but they're dangerous. They take a fellow's life out of him. They teach him one set of gesture— for instance, this means fear, this means rage, when they graduate they are willing to play anything from Shakespeare to George Ade without really knowing the feelings they're trying to express. Ain't that it?"

W. M. Crane was talking about a "funny and the boys." "Let me tell you a funny thing that happened in my 'Buffalo' the other night," he said. "Mr. Orr and Mr. McKay, who play the 'boys,' went to a restaurant to get a bite to eat after the play. A neighboring table sat a big German, who also had been at the play and who recognized the 'boys.' He looked at them with a lot of interest. As he left the restaurant he said to the table and laying his hand on one's shoulder, said: 'Well, I harr two boys also who are not worth a cuss.'"

John C. Rice and Sally Cohen in "A Bachelor's Wife," declared to bristle with uproariously funny lines. Pauline Hall, the popular queen of comic opera, who was on the opening bill taking in their more than nine years ago and who has not appeared in Omaha since, returns with those vocal and physical charms that brought her fame as a prima donna. Nellie Florede and her "Six English Rockers," a bevy of dainty and sprightly little singing girls have an act in four scenes, each with characteristic songs and dancing in their beautiful costumes, the appropriate songs being "Fluffy Ruffles of Long Ago," "Frow, Frow," "I'm a Regular College Chap" and "The Girl in the Rocking Chair." Bertie Heron, "The Minstrel Miss," does the burnt cork gait and amuses with song, dance and story. The felicitous troupe of Italian gymnasts, five women and three men, are in the act of catching songs being "Fluffy Ruffles of Long Ago," "Frow, Frow," "I'm a Regular College Chap" and "The Girl in the Rocking Chair."

When "The Fadedites" come to the Orpheum next week their program will be made up of numbers proven most popular by vote. Each patron of the Orpheum is invited to send in a list of the compositions and from pieces given having the majority of admirers according to these lists the daily program of "The Fadedites" will be arranged. No limit is placed on the character of the numbers selected; they may range from rag-time to classic; but to make orchestration possible, all the compositions submitted must be recognized in the list of standard works. For the convenience of patrons a blank coupon will be printed in the programs used today and all the coming week.

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